

THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS—PART 2 SOME ASPECTS OF THE STUDY OF THE COLEOPTERA OF KENT

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I have always had an interest in natural history and some of my earliest memories are of collecting woodlice at the age of two (and even then recognising that there were more than one species), and of breeding the magpie moth through to a second generation before my fourth birthday. Interests continued to fluctuate between one branch of wildlife and another (and still do to a certain extent), but after I had finished my National Service I resolved to try and concentrate my interests toward the study of Coleoptera. My uncle was then secretary of the local horticultural society and a certain Dr A. M. Masee was listed on the programme to talk about insects and garden pests. I went along to this meeting and managed to get myself introduced to Dr Masee as someone who was interested in beetles. He suggested that I come and visit him at his home so that he could show me how to go about a study of these insects properly. I can still remember that visit; I was directed up to his study where he was sat in front of his microscope and surrounded by several open storeboxes containing some of his largest and most colourful beetles. He showed me how to set beetles with some examples of *Gnorimus nobilis* (L.) that he just happened to have handy, he identified a few specimens that I had taken along, and invited me to join him on a trip to Deal the following weekend. This was a start to a fine friendship between us that lasted for the rest of his life.

Dr Masee kept a card index of the Hemiptera–Heteroptera of Kent of which he later published a full account (Masee, 1963), and in the mid-1950s he suggested that I do the same for the Coleoptera. This I agreed to do, not realising at the time that there were some eight times as many beetles as bugs, and that a great number more entomologists have looked at and still look at beetles than there are that look at the plant bugs.

Mainly because of its position and its geology, Kent is a very rich county from the natural history point of view. It is situated at the very south-east corner of the British Isles with some two-thirds of its borders influenced by maritime conditions. To the north it is bordered by the tidal Thames, looking across to Essex, to the east by the North Sea and the Strait of Dover, and to the south by the English Channel. France, which can be seen from many points along the coast on a fine day, is a mere 37 kilometres away.

During the Miocene period the centre of what is now Kent (and Surrey and Sussex) was pushed up as a large ripple caused by the formation of the Alps. Since that time this central area has been slowly weathered down and washed away along the rivers, a process that continues today as seen with the recent floods and resultant muddy waters being washed down the rivers to the sea. The main river systems now are the Darent, the Medway, the Stour and the Rother. This latter now reaches the sea at Rye in East Sussex although formerly it used to flow out in the Greatstone area of Kent. This weathering away of the soils has revealed the underlying rocks, which now leave an interesting pattern of soil types and conditions.

The most prominent feature of the county is the chalk scarp which runs roughly east to west. To the south of the chalk is found the calcareous Gault Clay, then comes the Lower Greensand consisting of slightly acid Folkestone Sands, and the

Hythe Beds which are a mixture of acid and calcareous rocks and form the Ragstone Ridge. Below this is found the Weald Clay, a flat area of rather neutral clayey soil, and in the extreme south of the county, in what is the central area of the Weald proper, are found the rather acid, hard rocks of the Tunbridge Wells Sands. To return to the north of the county, we find that overlying the chalk are the superficial deposits known as clay-with-flints. The London Clay is one of the major deposits in the north with the famous fossil-rich cliffs on Sheppey eroding quite dramatically, and it is this London Clay which acts as a source for the muddy salt-marshes in the Medway, Swale and parts of the Thames shore. Other sandy Eocene deposits are also found in the north of the county, particularly in the Whitstable–Canterbury area and in the area around Dartford and south-east London. The chalk crops out again to form the Isle of Thanet, and finally there are extensive recent deposits of alluvium which form the Romney Marsh, at whose southern end at Dungeness is found the greatest expanse of shingle in Europe.

I hope that the geologists among you will not eringe at this crude and simple overview of the geology of the county, but this is really just to try and illustrate the complexity of habitats that are found in the county. If we start in the north of the county we have the hard chalk cliffs at the eastern end of Thanet, the eroding London Clay cliffs on Sheppey with continual land slips, and the salt-marshes and grazing marshes by the Swale and Medway and along the Thames through to London. Starting from the true maritime environment of the North Sea, the Thames and surrounding land become less maritime as one travels west.

The acid sands south of Whitstable and around Canterbury support some fine woodlands often collectively known as the Blean, whilst in the west are the acid heathlands of Dartford Heath and Blackheath. The chalk supports some excellent downland with its rich flora supporting insects, while the chalk cliffs on the coast provide a unique habitat within the country. The Gault Clay with its many ponds and streams supports some fine woodlands, but it is also much-prized land for farming. The Folkestone Sands are poorer farming areas and support some nice woodland and heathland, but are also extensively quarried for their sand, providing further rich habitats for beetles. Likewise, the Ragstone of the Hythe Beds has been extensively quarried, these quarries again providing rich beetle habitats. The Weald Clay is extensively farmed and at first sight looks as though it might be less interesting, but the whole area is pitted with ponds and small lakes and is riddled with small streams. All these provide rich pickings for the coleopterist. The High Weald with its acid sandy rocks provides yet further habitats with extensive woodlands, often cut into by streams causing steep gills, sometimes with small waterfalls.

The extensive Romney Marsh is an area typically of sheep-grazing meadows bounded by an extensive network of marsh dykes, which are very rich with invertebrates. Then along the south coast is found the extensive shingle beach reaching from the Sussex border through to Dungeness. This is a unique area within the British Isles and needless to say is also home to many interesting and rare species of beetle.

As already mentioned, the county is dissected by various rivers. The Rother now only forms part of the boundary between Kent and Sussex and no longer has its entrance to the sea in Kent, but along its former course, particularly in the Fairfield area of the Romney Marsh, there are still relict populations of many coastal plants and invertebrates. The Darent enters the Thames in the area of the Dartford Marshes although these are now but a relict of the area as it used to be, mainly through the construction of the Thames barrier and subsequent work on the seawalls, plus other

developments in the area. However, upstream where it cuts through the chalk around Shoreham, there is still a very rich area for all forms of wildlife. Likewise, the Medway gap through the chalk is again of great interest and the Medway valley north of Maidstone I consider to be one of the richest areas in the county, but perhaps I am biased, as that is the area in which I live. The Medway estuary, together with the Swale (a waterway on the south side of Sheppey), provide the bulk of the extensive salt marshes to be found in the county. Finally the Stour cuts through the chalk in the Wye–Chilham area and through the extensive marshes around Stodmarsh, and reaches the sea at Sandwich where it continues to deposit sand at the mouth. These sands, which run from Deal through Sandwich Bay to the estuary, have long been popular with coleopterists, and the ‘Deal Sandhills’ are probably the best known beetle locality in the county. The gravel along each of these river valleys has been exploited over the years and there are now many gravel pits, usually flooded, to provide yet further habitats.

Although this all sounds ideal, the picture at the present day is not so good. We have the Channel Tunnel and the vast area of railway sidings and other associated developments around Folkestone. A new rail link is being cut right across the whole county and the motorways are being widened. Over the past few years, spokesmen from every local authority in the county have proclaimed that their patch must not lose out on all this new ‘prosperity’. So everywhere you go in the county, new warehouses, office blocks and housing are being built. Most of the land that remains is heavily farmed, either sown ley fields with cow-pats that contain no insects, or very large arable fields with no weeds and hence no insects.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century with the population centred on London, localities in Kent were very popular with coleopterists and other entomologists. A horse cab could easily reach Darenth, for Darenth Wood, or Birch Wood (now completely eaten up by Swanley) for an evening or a day’s collecting. With the advent of trains even more distant localities could be reached such as Whitstable, Deal or Folkestone. I should perhaps warn fellow entomologists that if they are ever looking at old collections they will probably not find the locality labels up to the standard that we expect these days. These old locality labels will probably reflect their station of arrival. ‘Whitstable’ can be anywhere in that area, but generally means somewhere in the Blean Woods. ‘Folkestone’ probably means Folkestone Warren or the chalk hills behind the town. ‘Deal’ can mean the Deal Sandhills, or any place from St Margaret’s Bay through to Pegwell Bay and inland to Ham Fen and other sites within a day’s walk of Deal.

This popularity of the county with coleopterists has its good and bad sides. We now have a very rich history of what has been found in the past, but on the down side it means that in researching past records there has never been a dull year. There have always been active coleopterists in or visiting the county and publishing what they find. So in contrast to many counties which have only ever had one or two active coleopterists, the entomological literature abounds with records from Kent. This means that if you ever pick up an old copy of any entomological journal such as the *Entomologist’s Monthly Magazine*, or a modern one such as *The Coleopterist*, you can be sure that there will be some Kent records to abstract. Perhaps we can quickly look at some of the more prominent of these entomologists.

In 1908 W. W. Fowler published an annotated list of the Coleoptera of the county in the *Victoria History of Kent*. Fowler will need no introduction, as he is the author of the five-volume *British Coleoptera* (1887–1891) which is the base-line for all work on British beetles. Although he did visit Kent a few times, most of the records for his Kent list were based on those of G. C. Champion, J. J. Walker and W. West.

Champion (1851–1927) was an active coleopterist who regularly collected in the county. He was an editor of the *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* in which he published some 426 articles, apart from publishing elsewhere such as in the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* of which he was also an editor. In 1870 on a visit to Sheppey he met J. J. Walker and together that day they discovered *Baris scolopacea* (Germar) new to Britain. They remained friends and collecting partners, and indeed some fifteen years later Champion was to marry a sister of Walker.

Whilst in the Royal Navy, Walker (1851–1939) was stationed at times in Chatham and at Sheerness. Whilst at Chatham he regularly collected in the Cobham Park area, or would catch a train to Snodland and then work his way along the Medway valley back to Chatham. Whilst at Sheerness on the Isle of Sheppey, he collected widely over the island and was particularly fond of the old bone factory at Queenborough, and of evening walks along the north coast from Sheerness along to the 'Royal Oak'. He published widely and mention should perhaps be made of his paper on Coleoptera and Hemiptera of the Deal Sandhills in 1900 and his List of Coleoptera of the Isle of Sheppey in 1932. Walker was connected with the *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* in some form or other from 1904 until his death and that journal contains many of his beetle records from the county.

W. West lived at Finsbury Park from around 1919 (before that period living in the Lewisham area) and was a former Honorary Curator of this Society. He collected mainly in the London area and north-west Kent and died in 1924.

Other collectors who have lived in the county include K. C. Side (died 1979) and A. M. Masee (1899–1967). Ken Side was a schoolmaster who lived in Dartford and then in Cuxton, collected widely in the county and published several short notes as well as a list of beetles from Farningham Wood (Side, 1961 and 1964). Dr Masee, a former President of the Society, lived at East Malling in the centre of the county, was a very active entomologist and published numerous notes on the Coleoptera. I have already mentioned his help toward myself, but this help and generosity was extended to anyone else who showed a genuine interest in beetles, or plant bugs. Many present-day entomologists owe quite a debt to Dr Masee from the experiences that he shared with his field craft and techniques in finding elusive species of beetle, and of their subsequent preparation.

Among the many visitors to the county mention must be made of H. Donisthorpe and T. Hudson Beare who published many notes of their finds during the first part of the twentieth century.

It is probably wrong to pick out present-day coleopterists who either live in or visit the county, but I must make mention of one. This is Mr A. A. Allen, formerly of Blackheath and now living in Charlton, who I consider to be one of the foremost amateur entomologists that this country has ever known. Some years ago he mentioned to me that he had just passed the one thousand mark for publications of entomological papers and short notes, and he is still going strong. A great number of these publications refer to Coleoptera in Kent, including lists of beetles from his garden at Blackheath (one of the largest lists of beetles from any one locality in the country) and a list of the Coleoptera recorded from Knole Park, Sevenoaks.

With a number of excellent coleopterists living in the county at the present, and with Kent still being very popular for visiting entomologists, the number of published references grows by the week, and I find it quite difficult to keep completely up-to-date.

In a county so potentially rich for beetles, and with an active history of past and present coleopterists recording in the county, then perhaps I should try and mention some of the beetles known from the county and something of what is known of their

present status. With something over 2900 species of beetles recorded from Kent, time will only allow for a small random selection of species to be mentioned. I should perhaps mention that there are also 448 species of Hemiptera–Heteroptera recorded from the county, an order of insects the study of which is quite compatible with that of the Coleoptera.

Cicindela campestris L., the green tiger beetle, is typically found on sandy heaths and in open sandy woodlands. The present (1971 onwards) recorded distribution (Fig. 1) must be well on the way to what is the true present distribution within the county, although records suggest that it is now far less common than formerly. However, *Cicindela maritima* Latreille and Dejean, which was recorded only from the Sandwich–Pegwell Bay area in the *Victoria County History*, is still present there and not likely to be found anywhere else in Kent. A specimen of *Cicindela sylvatica* L. in the Sunderland museum collection, labelled Sandwich Bay, is I feel a specimen that has become mislabelled in the past, as there is no other record from the county.

Omophron limbatum (Fab.) was first recorded from Rye in the neighbouring county of East Sussex in 1969. In April 1972, together with R. D. Pope and K. C. Side, I visited Rye Harbour to have a look at *Omophron* but, on the instructions of the warden, not to take specimens; in the seeing we were successful. Later in the day we moved on to the Dungeness area and, whilst walking around one of the flooded sandpits near Lydd, Ken Side mentioned that the damp sand area at the edge of the water looked very similar to the habitat where we had found *Omophron* earlier in the day. So I scooped up a handful of sand as we walked along and, to our amazement, two specimens of *Omophron limbatum* walked out. On searching, we found *Omophron* plentiful and also added *Heterocerus hispidulus* Kiesenwetter and *Dyschirius obscurus* (Gyllenhal), all three species new to the county, during the day. The Dungeness area has continued to yield new species, both for the county and the country, with *Bembidion coeruleum* Serville, new to Britain, during this last year (Telfer, 2001).

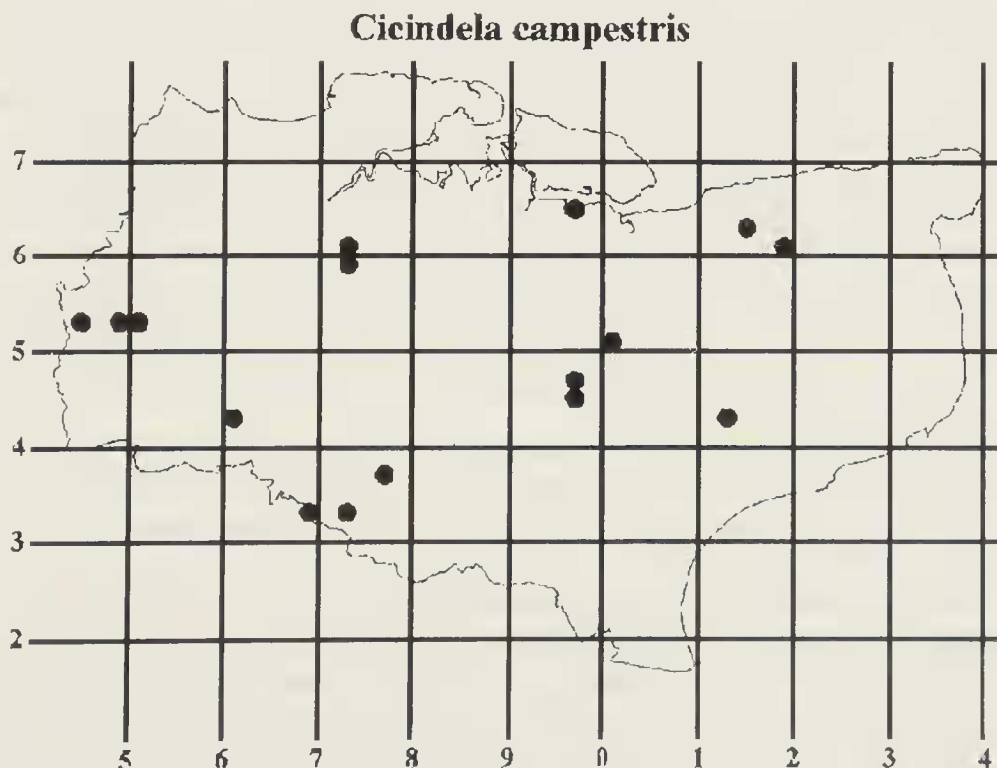


Fig. 1

Carabus granulatus L. is just recorded from a few marshy areas in the county, usually during the winter, hibernating under bark.

Leistus rufomarginatus (Duftschmid) was discovered new to Britain by Crowson (Crowson, 1942) near Sevenoaks in April 1942 and has spread throughout England and Wales since then. Although now widely scattered in the county, it certainly cannot be called common.

Brosicus cephalotes (L.) is a rather scarce beetle within the county, occurring in the only suitable coastal sand dunes we have, in the Deal–Sandwich Bay area and at Greatstone near Dungeness.

Laemostenus terricola (Herbst) is another rarely recorded species. Fowler in the *Victoria County History* (1908) stated that this species was ‘generally distributed and as a rule common’. However, the only 20th century record that I could trace was of it being found in an apple store at Aylesford in 1944 (Masse, 1945), until I found it in abundance in the same parish in 1965. It was found by placing pitfall traps baited with fish into rabbit burrows, the idea coming from that excellent little paper by Colin Welch, ‘A simple method of collecting insects from rabbit burrows’ (Welch, 1964). Each time I have tried this technique since then, it has always produced *L. terricola*, and it is also the only way I have taken *Catopidius depressus* (Murray) and *Aleochara cuticularum* Kraatz.

Panagaeus bipustulatus (Fab.) is a rather local species of open, dry sandy or chalky soils and, in my experience, usually taken singly. This was certainly the case of one taken in my garden a few days after moving in, and with not a sign since. Elsewhere in the county it is almost restricted to a few coastal localities.

Demetrias imperialis (Germar) is a delightful little insect that is a particular favourite of mine as it was probably the first beetle of any note that I took. Formerly confined to the Fens of Norfolk and adjoining counties, it was first recorded in Kent by Walker in 1898. Since then it has slowly spread through the coastal marshes and up the river estuaries (Fig. 2). It is most often found in old stems of great reedmace, *Typha latifolia* L.

In a complete opposite to the last species, *Brachinus crepitans* (L.) has been steadily decreasing in range over much the same period of time. Formerly much more widespread, the bombardier beetle is now restricted to a few coastal areas in the county, and even there is found only at the very top of the shore line.

The distribution and status of the water beetles of the county were summarised by Carr and Philp in 1988. Mention might be made of *Hygrobia hermanni* (Fab.), the screech beetle, a fairly frequent species in ponds and stagnant ditches throughout most of the county (Fig. 3). One of the specialities of the county is the great silver diving beetle, *Hydrophilus piceus* (L.), which is regularly found in marsh dykes in the north and south of the county, but occasionally turning up inland, usually then at light traps or street lights (Fig. 4).

The Staphylinidae present some problems in recording distribution in that only the serious coleopterists will look at and are able to identify these, and so there are fewer records. *Tachyporus hypnorum* (Fab.) is one of the commoner species and the resultant distribution map (Fig. 5) shows the progress so far for a species that is probably found throughout the county. Another species, *Tachyporus chrysomelinus* (L.), equally as common, presents further problems as it was recently split into two species (Booth, 1988). All old records have had to be put aside and fresh records kept for both *T. chrysomelinus* and the split, *T. dispar* (L.), and always having to check that the recorder for any record sent in for this species is aware of this split.

The lesser stag beetle *Dorcus parallelipipedus* (L.) is a frequent species found in and around old stumps and is a beetle that does get reported by general naturalists at

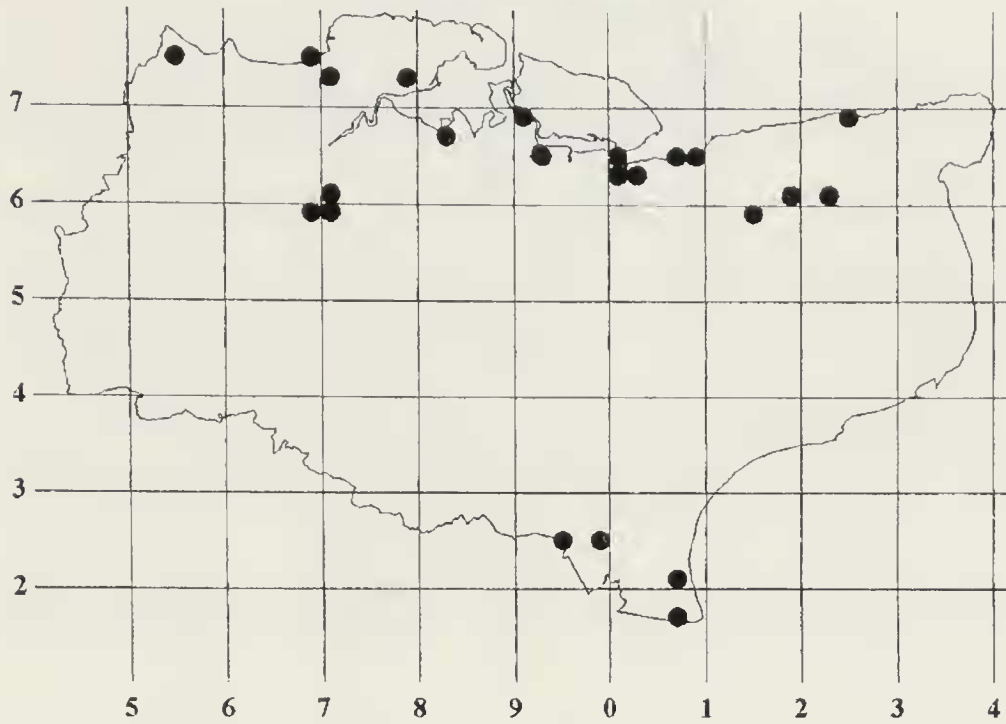
Demetrias imperialis

Fig. 2

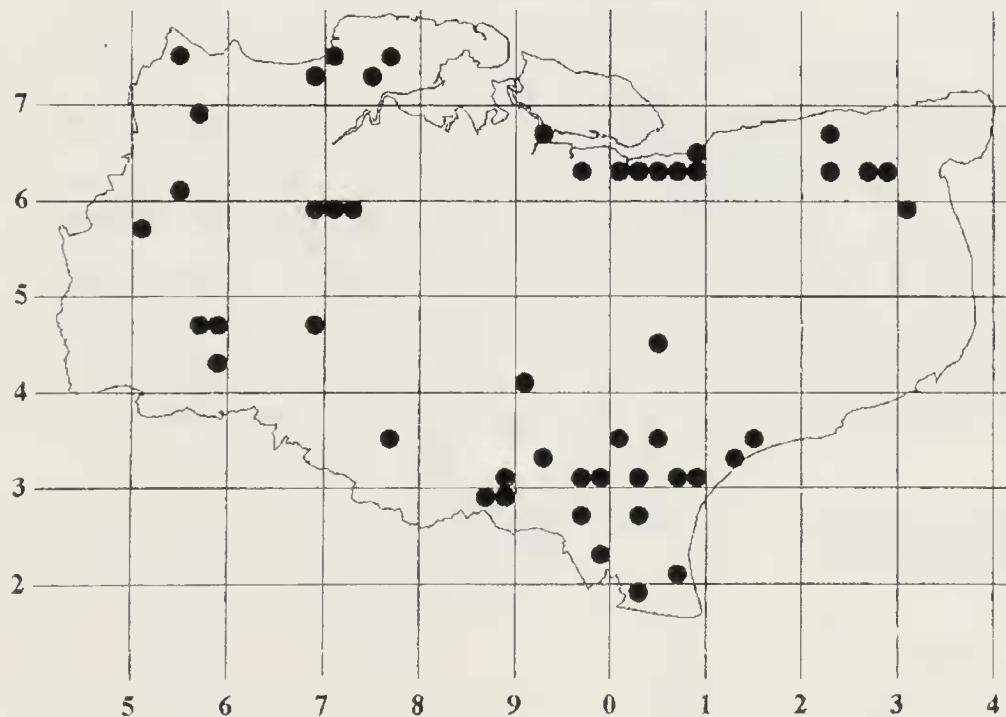
Hygrobia hermanni

Fig. 3

times. Here always one has to check that it has not been mis-identified for a female stag beetle *Lucanus cervus* (L.), and vice versa. The Notable stag beetle is one of the insects that is heavily protected by the law and receives a lot of publicity and attention from the conservation bodies. However, in Kent, the stag beetle is quite frequent in gardens, parks and hedgerows in the north of the county between

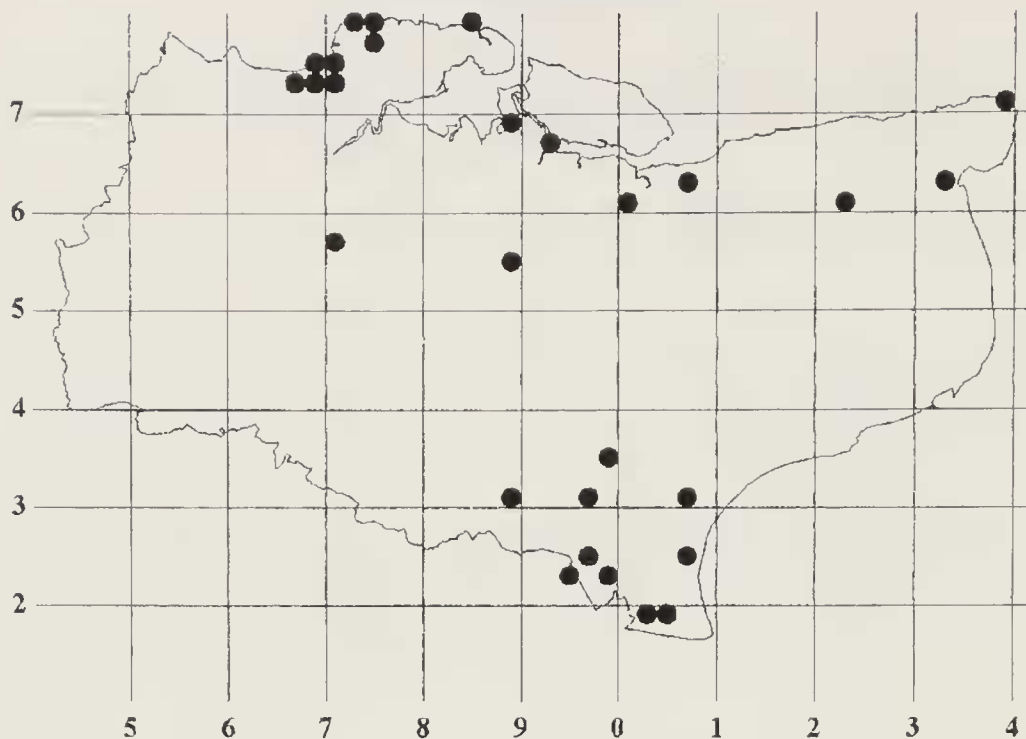
Hydrophilus piceus

Fig. 4

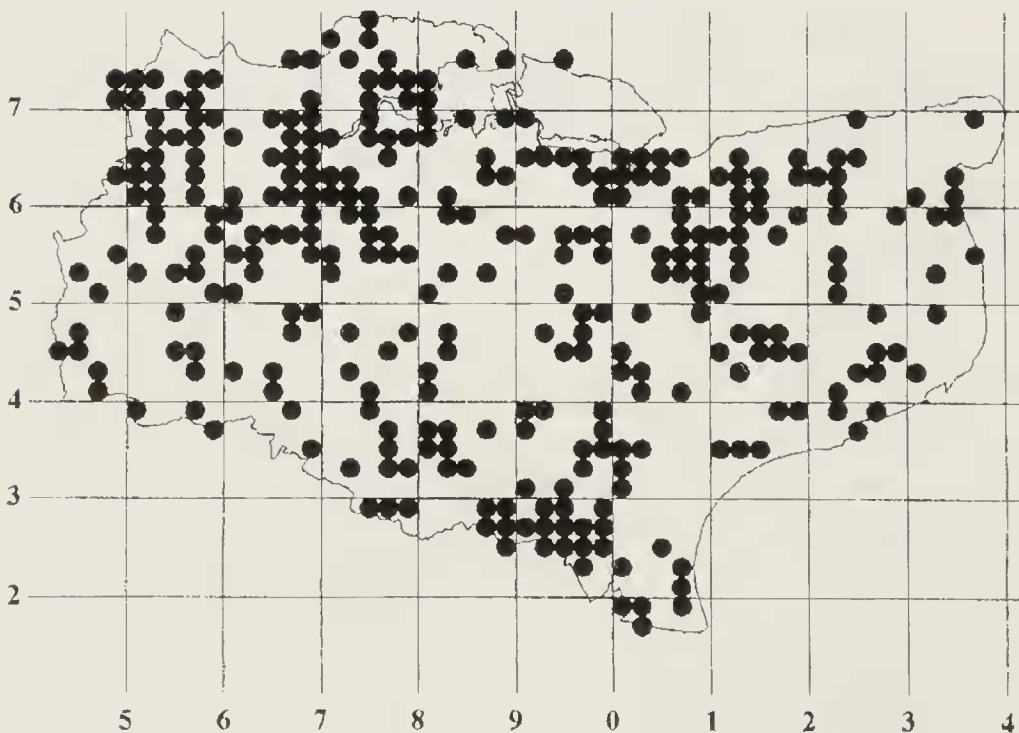
Tachyporus hypnorum

Fig. 5

London and Canterbury (Fig. 6). The spectacular *Typhaeus typhoeus* (L) appears to be restricted to the more sandy, heathy areas in the county where rabbits are present. It digs long tunnels in the sandy soil into which it carries rabbit droppings, but in recent weeks, because of the high water table, it has been found quite close to the surface in very short tunnels. *Serica brunea* (L.), a small brown chafer, is another

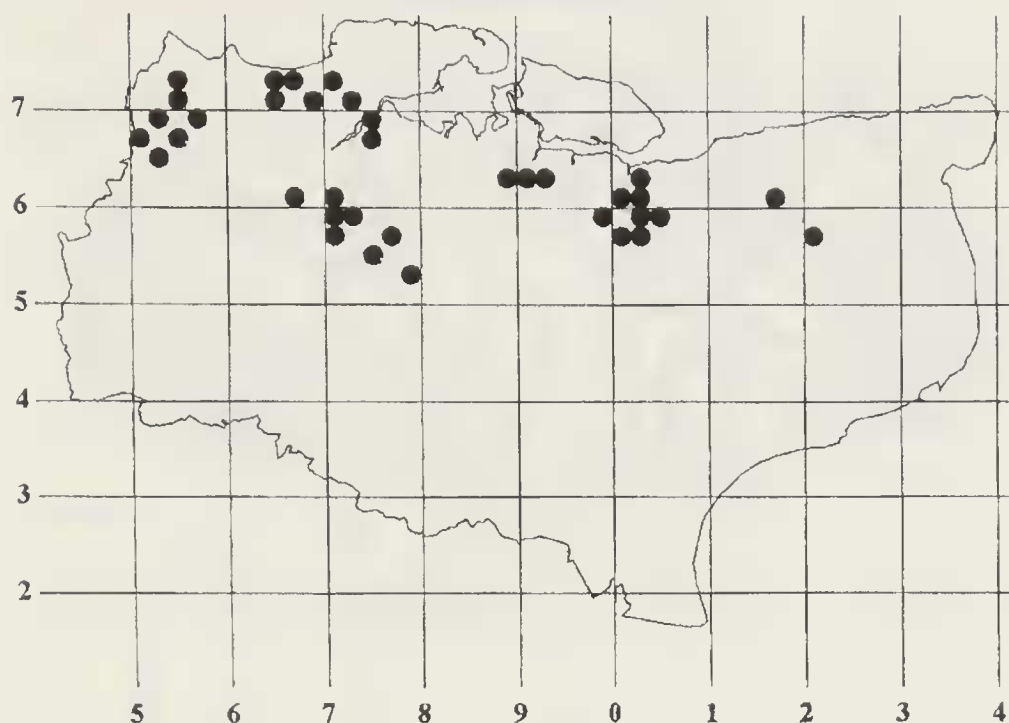
Lucanus cervus

Fig. 6

rather local species of sandy areas, but is attracted to light and so is often reported by members of the public when attracted to lighted windows, or by lepidopterists because it is attracted to their m.v. lamps.

A common beetle, and one of the most obvious, is the soldier beetle *Rhagonycha fulva* (Scopoli), still regularly known as 'blood-sucker' by the general public. I would have expected this species to be found throughout the county and the present distribution map (Fig. 7) shows the recording progress so far.

Another species that sits out prominently on flower heads is *Malachius bipustulatus* (L.), but whether this will be as widespread as the previous species has still to be worked out. However, other members of this genus appear to have a much more restricted and interesting distribution, such as *Malachius vulneratus* ABCILLE, which appears to be confined to the salt marshes along the Thames and in the Medway estuary.

The delightful little *Anthoconus rufus* (Herbst) is another species such as the already mentioned *Deinetrias imperialis* (Germar), that was formerly restricted to the Fens but over the last fifty years or so has been spreading around the coastal marshes and along the river valleys.

Eudymachus coccineus (L.) is a spectacular-looking beetle with a thinly scattered distribution in woodland areas. It is associated with fungus-infected trunks and logs and is always pleasing to find. Much rarer is *Diaperis boleti* (L.), first discovered in the county in 1988 and with a few subsequent records. From records elsewhere in the country this species has probably extended its range in recent years. My own observations are that it is associated with the bracket fungus *Piptoporus betulinus* (Bull.) Karst. on birch.

Lagria hirta (L.) has a widespread but rather localised distribution within Kent. However, the slightly larger but similar-looking *Lagria atripes* Mulsant and Guillebeau now appears to be lost to the county. Recorded as new to Britain in 1948 (Allen, 1948) from the Blean Woods, *L. atripes* was common in the Orlestone

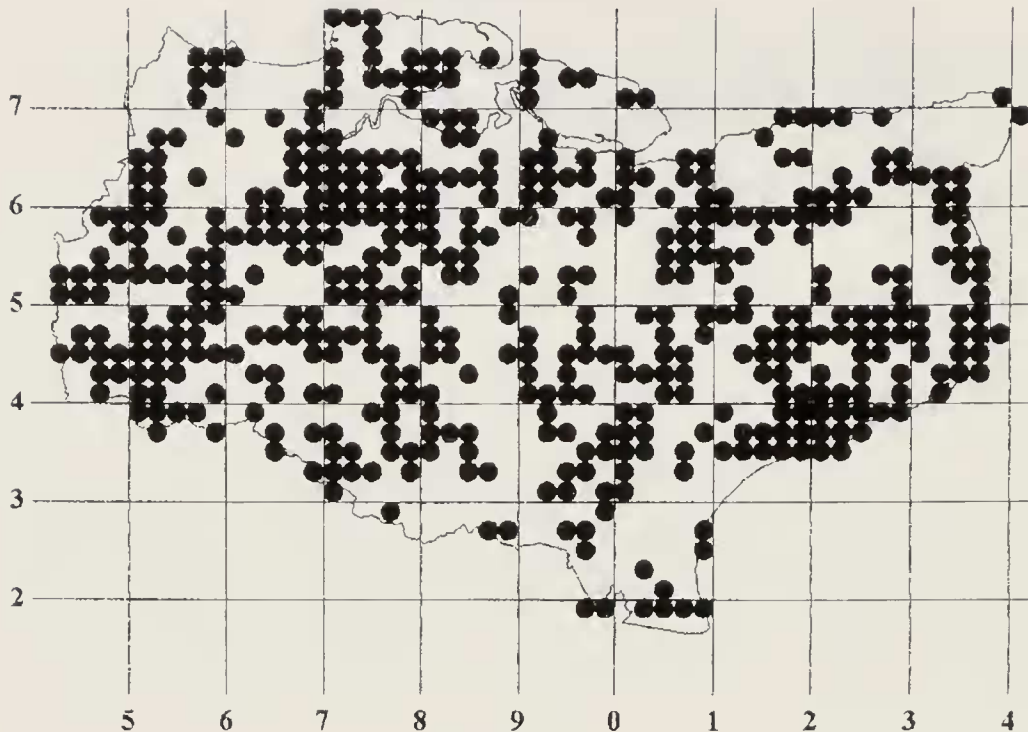
Rhagonycha fulva

Fig. 7

Forest area from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, where it was last seen in 1963. It is difficult to find a reason why this beetle should have come and gone like that.

Another very localised tenebrionid beetle is *Cteniopus sulphureus* (L.) which is confined to the coast between Dungeness and Sandwich. Even here its distribution is rather patchy, but where it does occur it is usually in abundance.

The two cardinal beetles are both found in woodlands scattered throughout the county. *Pyrochroa serraticornis* (Scopoli) (Fig. 8) is much the more frequent of the two, while *P. coccinea* (L.) is a much more local insect.

I will make mention of *Osphya bipunctata* (Fab.), a Monks Wood speciality that has been recorded from the Chattenden Woods area in the past. I have searched for hours on many occasions to try and re-find this species in the county, but so far without any success. This is often the way in that one has good fortune in finding one species, but no luck with another of similar standing. One local species that I have searched for and found on numerous occasions is *Oncomera femorata* (Fab.). This is a strange beetle that on first sight looks like a cross between a cantharid and a cerambycid. It occurs in chalky areas and is best searched for during the winter months when it can be found under large flat pieces of wood lying on the ground, either among ivy, *Hedera helix* L., or with that plant nearby.

Meloe proscarabaeus L. is the only oil beetle to have been found in the county over the past fifty years, yet in the past some nine species of Meloidae have been recorded. Donisthorpe (1903) records taking 25 specimens of *Meloe cicatricosus* Leach in two weeks in the Margate area in April 1903, and this is only one of many similar records, particularly from that area, around that time. It is difficult to understand why we have lost these beetles, where, in spite of the vast amount of building and other development, there are still sites with good colonies of solitary bees (their presumed hosts).

The longhorn beetles always attract attention and have been responsible for a number of people to take a closer interest in this group of insects. I would not say

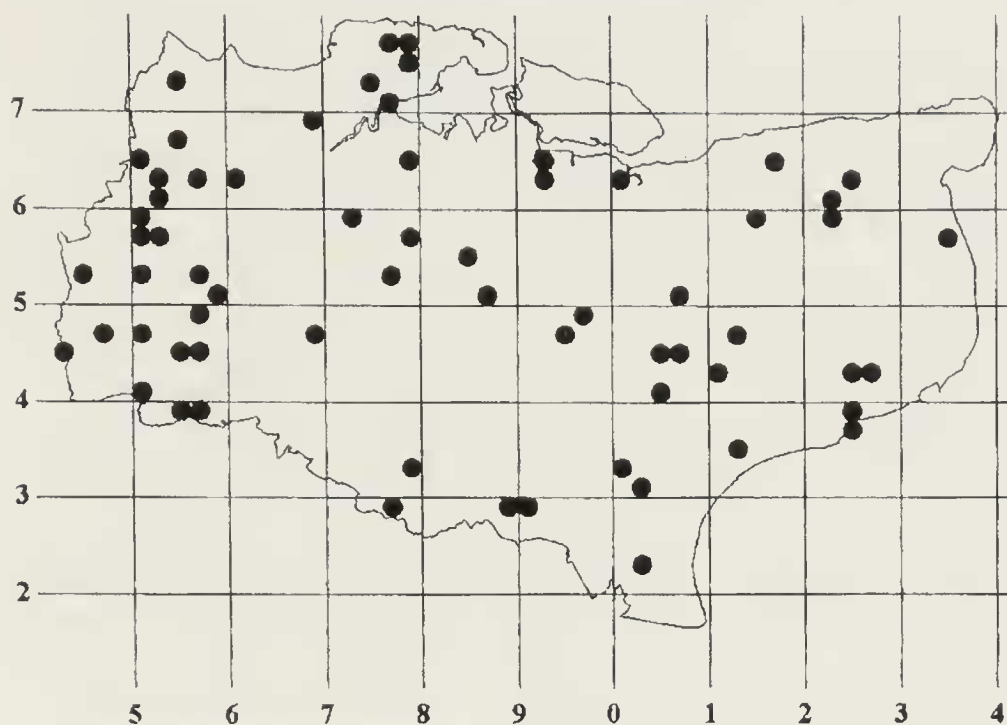
Pyrochroa serraticornis

Fig. 8

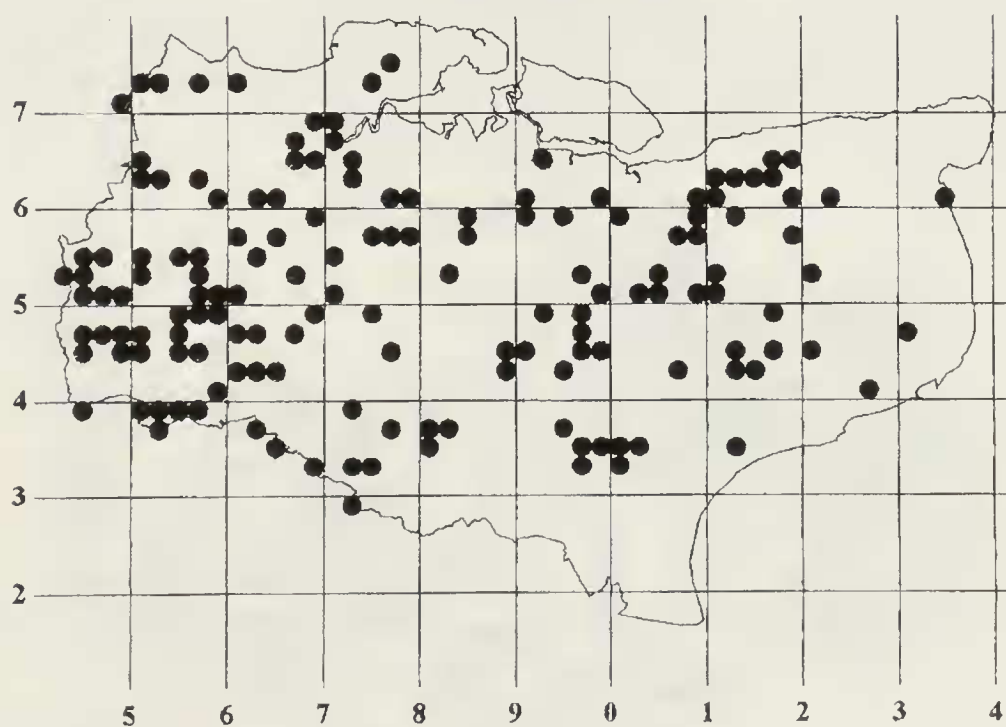
Leptura maculata

Fig. 9

that Kent was rich in this family of beetles, and although some 52 species have been recorded in the county there are only recent records for half of these. One of the most frequent is *Leptura maculata* Poda which has been quite widely recorded (Fig. 9).

Macrolea nutica (Fab.) is a rather scarce aquatic member of the Chrysomelidae which I have had the pleasure of finding on several occasions. On all but one of these

occasions I was specifically looking for this beetle by pulling out fennel pondweed *Potamogeton pectinatus* L. from suitable dykes and waiting for the beetle to crawl out. The other occasion I was walking around the edge of a flooded gravel pit in the Medway valley and on looking into the water at a submerged clump of fennel pondweed I observed several *M. mutica* crawling over the plant.

The ladybirds, always popular with the general public, have received a lot of attention from the scientific point of view in recent years. One of the major publications has been that by Roger Hawkins on the *Ladybirds of Surrey* (Hawkins, 2000). His excellent distribution maps show what can be done when a determined effort is made with one group. This publication was of particular interest to me as Surrey is one of the neighbouring counties to Kent, and his near-complete coverage of the seven-spot ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata* L. illustrates that I still have quite a lot of work to do to obtain the same coverage for Kent (Fig. 10).

The scarce seven-spot ladybird *Coccinella magnifica* Restenbacher looks very similar to its common cousin but has a much more restricted range (Fig. 11) and is found associated with the wood ant *Formica rufa* L. Another species associated with the same ant is the chrysomelid *Clytra quadripunctata* (L.) and this has a similar restricted distribution (Fig. 12). When we compare the recorded distribution of the wood ant (Fig. 13) with these last two species I think that it shows the association of these species with the wood ant, but also shows likely areas where further records of these two species of beetle might be obtained.

The bloody-nosed beetle *Timarcha tenebricosa* (Fab.) is a species that as a boy I used to see quite frequently, and old records show that it was a common and widely distributed species. The larvae feed upon one of the most common and widely distributed plants in the county, cleavers *Galium aparine* L., and also the almost as frequent hedge bedstraw *Galium mollugo* L., yet the beetle has now become very scarce, and as the distribution map (Fig. 14) will show, is almost restricted to the coast between Folkestone and Sandwich.

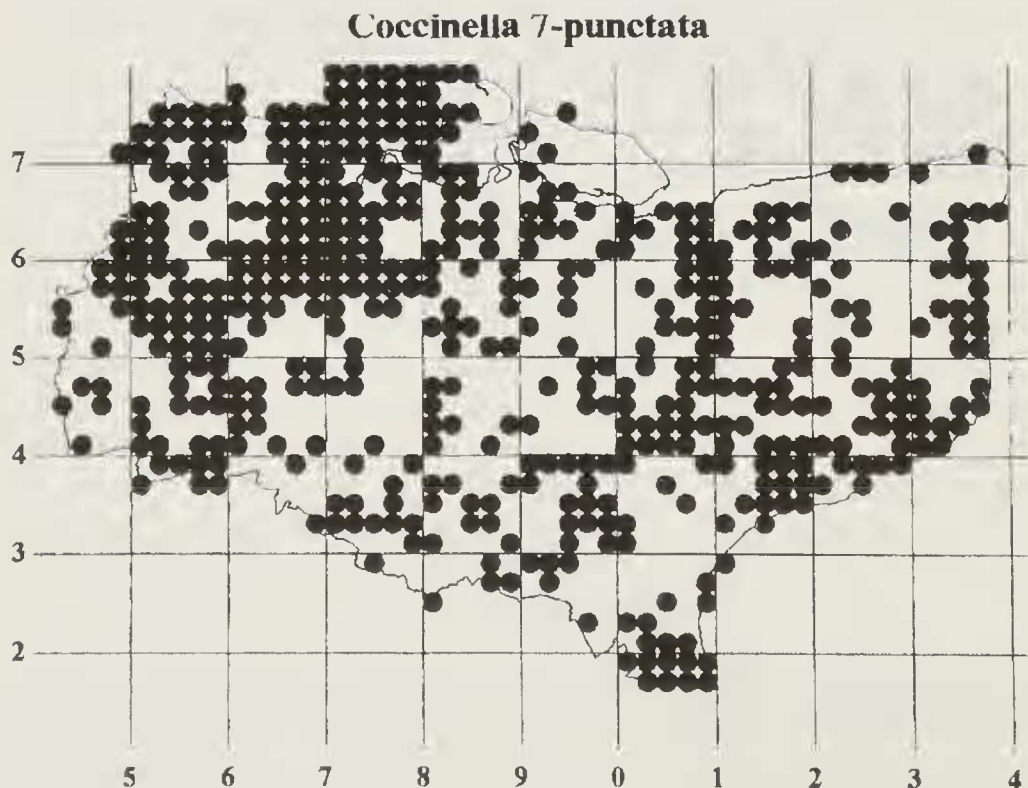


Fig. 10

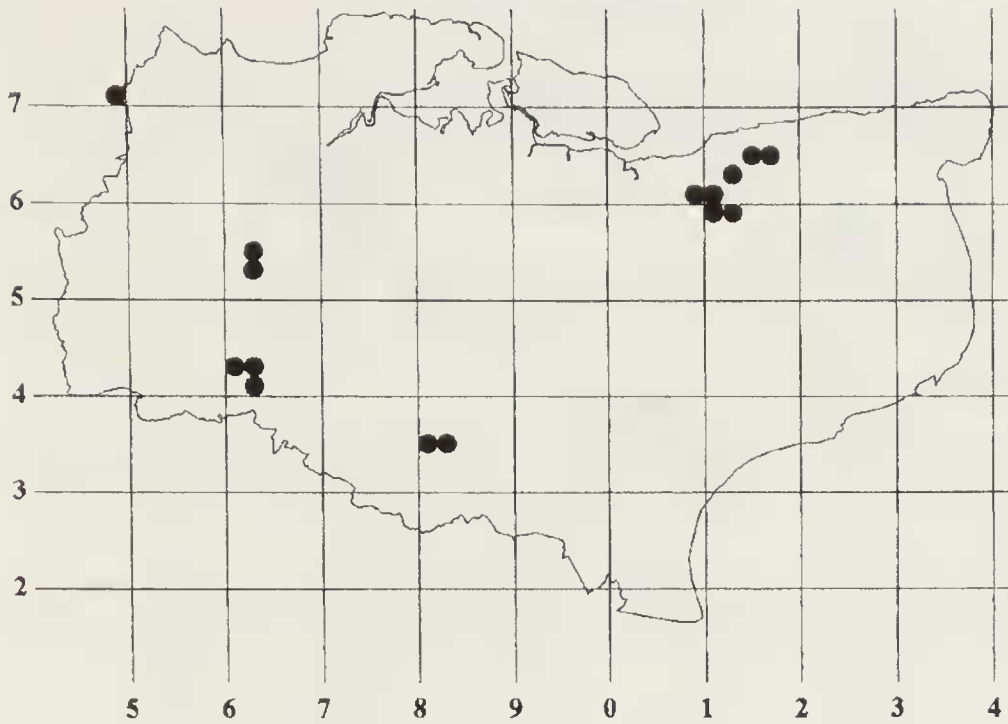
Coccinella magnifica

Fig. 11

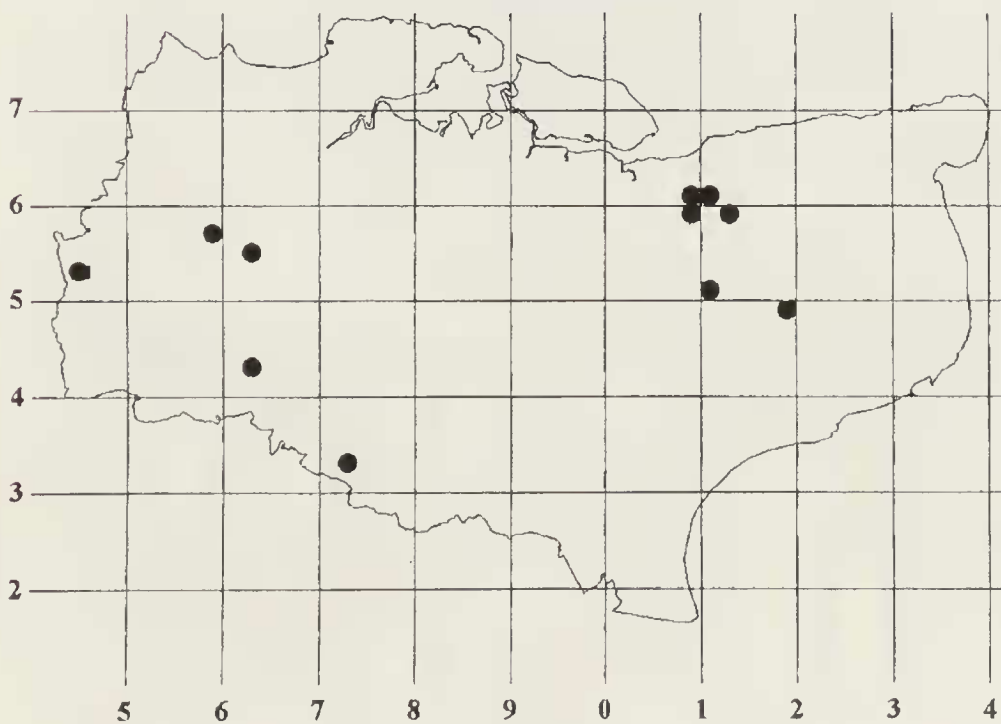
Clytra quadripunctata

Fig. 12

Gastrophysa viridula (DeGeer), a common beetle in some parts of the country, is one of the rarest in Kent. It was recorded once by J. J. Walker along the Medway valley in the 1890s and not seen again until found by Kevin Chuter along the Beult valley (to the south of Maidstone) in 1992 and subsequent dates (Chuter, 2000). *Prasocuris*

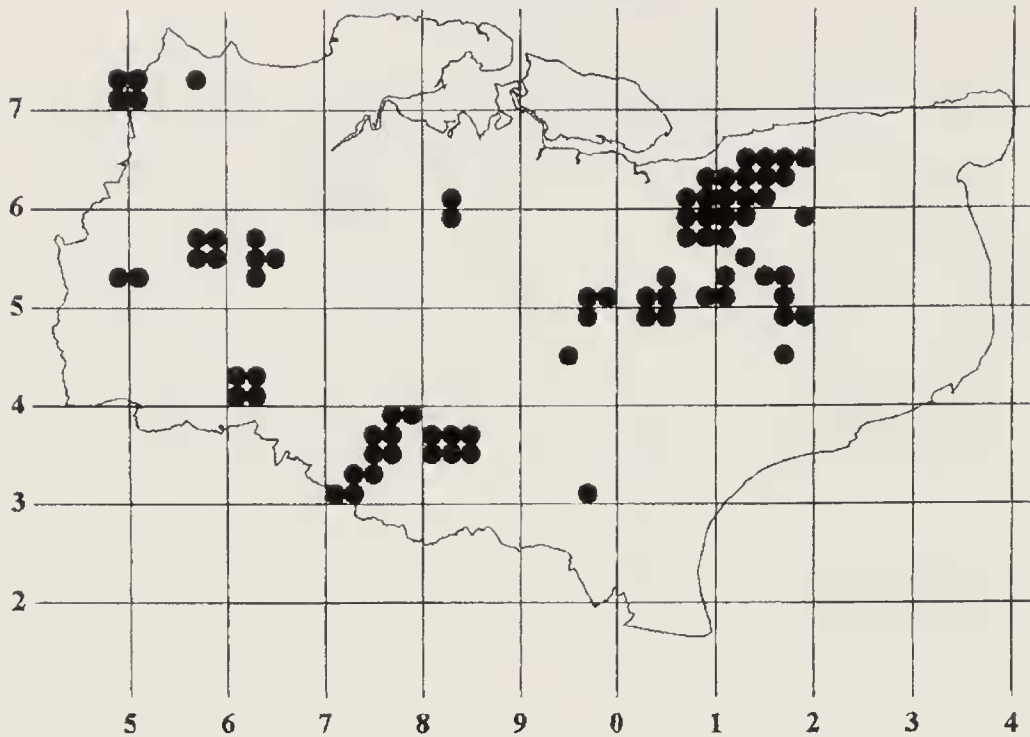
Formica rufa

Fig. 13

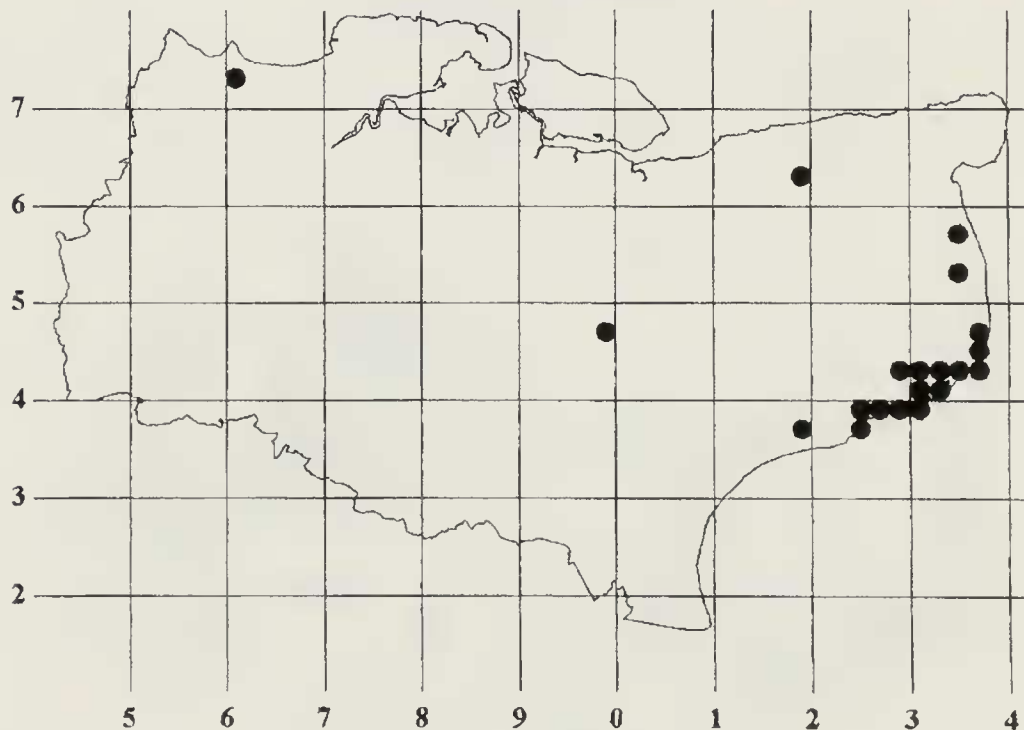
Timarcha tenebricosa

Fig. 14

phellandrii (L.) is another attractive chrysomelid beetle that is quite frequent in marshy areas where various species of water-dropwort *Oenanthe* sp. occur (Fig. 15).

Platyrhinus resinusus (Scop.) is one of the exciting anthribid beetles, which are always pleasing to find. There are a few scattered records spread throughout the county, but I feel that it is perhaps more frequent than these few records suggest. On

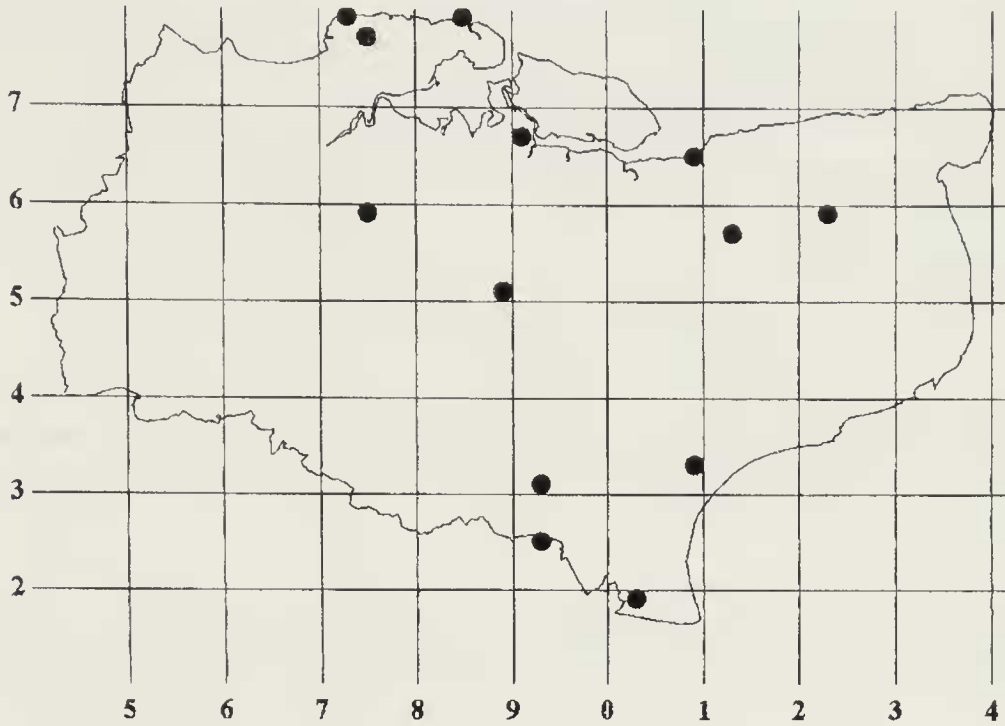
Prasocuris phellandrii

Fig. 15

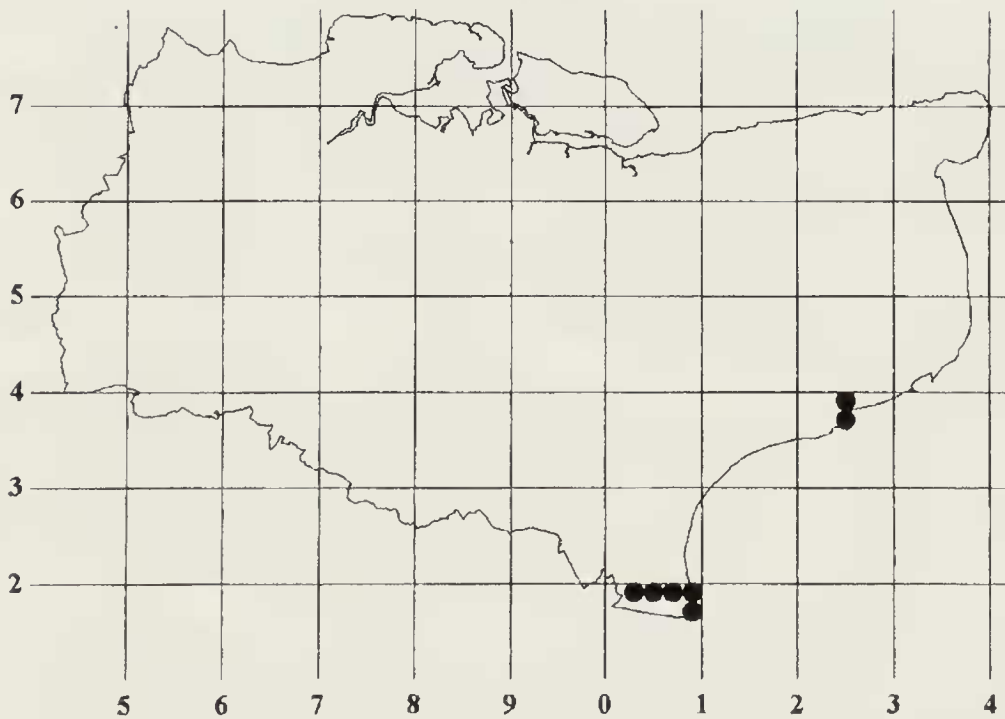
Ceut. geographicus

Fig. 16

one occasion I can remember that on approaching a fallen ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* L.) trunk heavily infested with the fungus *Daldinia concentrica* (Bolt.) Ces. and de Not., I spotted something small drop off. On careful inspection where this object had fallen I found a fine specimen of this beetle. I then looked at several other infected trunks and found numerous further specimens, each time the beetles would drop to the

ground as I approached, and their cryptic coloration would make them very difficult to find among the dead bits of vegetation and twigs. I could not be sure if it was my movements or the vibration from my approach that caused them to drop, but it was a very effective method of concealment.

Pseudoprotapiou astragali (Paykull) is a weevil that I must mention as it was another one of the species that Dr Masee showed me on that first visit to him all those years ago. Ever since, I have shaken every plant of its host plant, wild liquorice *Astragalus glycyphyllos* L., that I have ever found, and I have done a reasonable amount of botanising in the county, but I have only ever found it once. It was quite abundant on this one occasion, and although it has been recorded on a few other occasions, it remains, for some non-apparent reason, a very rare insect in the county.

The last beetle I will mention is another beautiful weevil that is well named, *Ceutorhynchus geographicus* (Goeze), after its map-like markings on the elytra. This is another scarce insect, being found on its host plant, viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare* L., in a few localities in the south of the county, mainly about Dungeness and Folkestone (Fig. 16).

I trust that you have all found this brief look at some of the aspects of the study of the beetles in Kent of interest. Finally I must thank all those people who have supplied records to me over the years and trust will continue to do so, and that it may eventually be possible to produce a full account of all the beetles to be found in Kent.

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SHORT COMMUNICATION

Forthampton Oaks, Gloucestershire: a site of major importance for saproxylic invertebrates—I first brought Forthampton Oaks—near Tewkesbury (SO83)—to the notice of readers nearly ten years ago when I discovered *Trinodes hirtus* (Fab.) on one of the ancient oak pollards (Alexander, 1992). This was an addition to the county beetle list at that time. The site was ear-marked for further recording but the opportunity to carry out a more extended investigation did not arise for some time.

Contact was established with the tenant farmer early in 1999 and a visit by members of the Gloucestershire Invertebrate Group followed on 14 August. The finds from that one visit were outstanding (see below) and a follow-up visit was made on 22 April the following year.

Amongst the more significant finds are:

Coleoptera:

Ampedus cardinalis (Schiödte): single elytron suspected as belonging to this species, 1999; live adults and larvae in red-rotten oaks, 2000; a new county record—albeit with a second locality discovered in 2000;

Procræus tibialis (Boisduval & Lacordaire): elytra frequent in debris in hollow oaks, 1999; live adult in oak, 2000, coll. John Harper—a fairly widespread species in the north of the county, although rare nationally;

Globicornis rufitarsis (Panzer): one dead adult amongst debris in old oak, 2000—last recorded in the county over 100 years ago;

Trinodes hirtus (Fab.): larvae numerous under webby bark on ancient oak pollard, 20.x.1991, adult reared; larvae on most of the trees sampled, 1999 & 2000—one of only two localities known in the county;

Opilo mollis (L.): fragments in debris in hollow oaks, 1999; live adults beneath dead bark on oak trunks, 2000—one of only two sites in the county where it has been seen in recent years;

Prionychus melanarius (Germar): elytron under loose oak bark, 1999—one of about four areas where it is known in the county.

Pseudoscorpiones:

Dendrochernes cyrneus (L. Koch): under trunk bark on ancient oak, 1999—one of four known areas in the county for this species.

All of the above currently have British Red Data Book or Nationally Scarce status. The species combination reads more like a combination of Windsor Great Park and Sherwood Forest than an obscure backwater along the Severn Vale. However, this general area is proving to be truly remarkable for saproxylics—the equally amazing Bredon Hill (Whitehead, 1996) and Croome Park (Lott *et al.*, 1999) are still very new to entomology.

The site comprises some 30 to 40 ancient oaks within an area of commercially farmed land—partly under rye-grass ley and partly sweet corn. About one-third of